

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 11, 2014

Contacts: Ken Warren, Ken_Warren@fws.gov, 772/469-4323
Tom MacKenzie, 404/679-7291, tom_mackenzie@fws.gov

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Lists the Florida Leafwing and Bartram's Scrub-Hairstreak Butterflies as Endangered, and Designates Critical Habitat

VERO BEACH, FL. -- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is listing the Bartram's scrub-hairstreak and Florida leafwing butterflies as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). At the same time, the Service is designating critical habitat for both butterflies, which are only found in South Florida.

The Bartram's scrub-hairstreak was historically locally common within pine rocklands on the Florida mainland and the Florida Keys in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, while only sporadically occurring as strays in Collier, Palm Beach, Martin, and Broward Counties. The current range of the Bartram's scrub-hairstreak includes Big Pine Key, including the National Key Deer Refuge in Monroe County, and Everglades National Park in Miami Dade County, as well as locally within conservation lands adjacent to Everglades National Park.

Historically, the Florida leafwing was locally common within pine rocklands of the mainland and the Florida Keys in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, while only sporadically occurring as strays in Collier, Palm Beach, and Broward Counties. The current range of the Florida leafwing includes only Everglades National Park in Miami-Dade County.

The decline of the Bartram's scrub-hairstreak and Florida leafwing butterflies is primarily the result of habitat destruction and fragmentation, including climate change, and lack of adequate fire management, poaching, parasitism, predation, disease, small population size, restricted range, and influence of chemical pesticides used for mosquito control.

The Service is designating critical habitat for the Bartram's scrub-hairstreak in seven separate units across about 11,539 acres of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, Florida. Five of the units are occupied by the butterfly. Land ownership within the critical habitat area consists of federal (80 percent), state (5 percent), and private/other lands (15 percent).

The Service is designating critical habitat for the Florida leafwing in four separate units across about 10,561 acres of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, Florida. One of the

units is occupied by the butterfly. Land ownership within the critical habitat area consists of federal (85 percent), state (3 percent), and private/other lands (12 percent). The entire Florida leafwing's critical habitat area is within the Bartram's scrub Hairstreak's critical habitat area.

Listing these butterflies and designating critical habitat for them will not stop or affect present mosquito control spraying in the Florida Keys (Monroe County) or in other areas of the butterflies' ranges. There is no mosquito control spraying within the pine rocklands of Everglades National Park (Miami-Dade County), and mosquito control pesticide use within other Miami-Dade County pine rocklands outside of the Everglades is already limited. In addition, National Key Deer Refuge and Florida Key Mosquito Control District (Monroe County) have worked to modify the District's annual Special Use Permit, which allows them to spray on Big Pine Key. The permit has been modified so that no spray zones and buffers have been expanded to include most of the pine rockland, butterfly habitat on Big Pine Key.

The listing of these two butterflies and designation of critical habitat is part of the Service's efforts to implement a court-approved work plan under a Multi-District Listing Agreement aimed at addressing a series of lawsuits concerning the agency's ESA listing program. The intent of the agreement is to significantly reduce a litigation-driven workload. For more information, please see <http://www.fws.gov/southeast/candidateconservation/>

An economic analysis was conducted to determine the potential impact of the butterflies' critical habitat designation on various sectors of the economy. The Service anticipates no more than eight to nine consultations per year in the critical habitat units. The analysis concluded the economic impacts of the proposed designation are likely to range from \$400 to \$9,000 per consultation resulting in approximately \$72,000 (2013 dollars) in a given year. Critical habitat is not likely to generate additional consultations and in circumstances where consultation does occur, additional project modifications are unlikely.

Designation of critical habitat does not affect land ownership or establish a refuge, reserve, preserve, or other conservation area. Although most of the areas within the proposed critical habitat designation are located on federal lands, a small number of private landowner activities could be affected if any activities on the private lands are authorized, funded, or carried out by a federal agency. If federal funds are involved in a project in the area, the government agency involved will need to work with the Service to help landowners avoid, reduce, or mitigate potential impacts to the butterflies or to ensure actions do not negatively affect or modify their critical habitat.

Designating critical habitat informs landowners and the public of the specific areas that are important to the conservation of the species and is required under the law. Identifying this habitat also helps focus the conservation efforts of other conservation partners, such as state and local governments, non-governmental organizations, and individuals. The Service's identification of critical habitat areas is based on the best scientific information

available, and considered all relevant information provided by the public, government agencies, the scientific community, industry and other interested parties during the public comment period.

The Service initially proposed to protect the Bartram's scrub-hairstreak and Florida leafwing butterflies on August 15, 2013. At the same time, the Service proposed designation of critical habitat for these butterflies. The Service re-opened the comment period on the proposed critical habitat and draft economic analysis on May 8, 2014. All comments received are posted at <http://www.regulations.gov> and are addressed in the two butterflies' final critical habitat designation rule. The critical habitat designation goes into effect on September 11, 2014, 30 days after its publication in Federal Register.

For more information about these actions, please visit www.fws.gov/verobeach or the Federal Register at <http://www.regulations.gov>, Docket # FWS-R4-ES-2013-0084 (listing) and Docket # FWS-R4-ES-2013-0031 (critical habitat).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit www.fws.gov/southeast. Connect with us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast, follow our tweets at www.twitter.com/usfwssoutheast, watch our YouTube Channel at <http://www.youtube.com/usfws>, and download photos from our Flickr page at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwssoutheast>.